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MASTER FILE

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MEMORANDUM FOR Brian Monaghan

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Attention: Management Training Branch
Field Division

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Subject: Trip Report, Burlington, Vermont Local Census Office and
Observation of List/Enumerate

1. Introduction

This memorandum documents my observation trip to the Vermont Local Census Office (LCO) in Burlington, and my observation of the List/Enumerate (L/E) operation in Eden, Vermont. The trip occurred on March 28 and 29, 2000.

The L/E operation is conducted in mostly rural areas where the Census Bureau does not have an accurate address list. In these areas, enumerators are assigned geographic areas called assignment areas (AAs) to canvass, mapspot, address list, and interview.

My contact person for this trip was the LCO manager (LCOM). I spoke with her twice, prior to the trip, to coordinate my observation.

2. Thursday, March 30, 2000

I arrived at the LCO in Williston, which is approximately seven miles east of Burlington, at 8:00 a.m. The LCO seemed well organized. There were separate areas for L/E, Update/Leave, questionnaire assistance, recruiting, check-in, and administration. I met with the LCOM when she arrived.

She informed me that the assistant LCOM (ALCOM) had run into difficulty finding an enumerator for me to observe that day. She said that the ALCOM would locate an enumerator for me to observe the next day. I was shown around the LCO, and was asked numerous questions regarding the census, and in particular, the long form. After spending several minutes touring the LCO, the LCOM excused herself, and I spoke with the three people working in the L/E area. They were reviewing the listing books and the questionnaires. I was told that they checked to make sure all the information on the listing pages was filled and that it matched to the questionnaires. I noticed that the random start, generated as part of the long form sampling specifications, seemed to have been implemented correctly.

After viewing the L/E procedure, I sat in on a conference call with the Vermont Secretary of State, the LCOM, and the partnership specialist. The Secretary was calling to set up a press conference that afternoon with the Governor and the LCOM at the state house in Montpelier. The Governor was going to sign a proclamation encouraging the residents of Vermont to complete and send back their census forms. The Secretary of State was interested in the current response rates for the Vermont localities and for the state as a whole. She also wanted any information on problems with the census. The LCOM replied that the two major problems were complaints about the long form and duplicate forms in the non-L/E areas. Both the LCOM and the partnership specialist were knowledgeable and worked well together. They were able to address all of the Secretary's questions and concerns.

I was invited to join the LCOM and the partnership specialist at the press conference. As there was no field work to observe that day I went along. The hope was that the press conference would be covered by the news media. As it turned out, only one reporter attended. Governor Dean arrived about 1:45 and gave a brief statement regarding the census proclamation. He then answered a series of questions from the reporter. When needed, the LCOM and the partnership specialist intervened with information. The press conference and questions took approximately 20 minutes.

3. Friday, March 31, 2000

I met a crew leader at a local eatery at 9:10 a.m. in Morrisville, Vermont. Morrisville is about 40 miles east of Williston. This was closest L/E area to Williston that the ALCOM could find. We then drove about seven miles further west to the house of a local parson who had donated the use of his basement to the Census Bureau. This is where the crew leader worked from and where the enumerators picked up their assignments and dropped off the completed registers and questionnaires. The crew leader I had met in Morrisville was from another district and was assisting the crew leader for the district I was observing.

The crew leader was checking over the registers when I arrived. He had been informed of my visit and had been expecting me. They were in their third week of L/E and other than the reluctance of some people to answer all of the long form questions, he said that things were proceeding smoothly.

The crew leader informed me that the enumerator I would be observing could not start until noon. As I waited and talked with the crew leader, several enumerators came and went, dropping off registers and questionnaires, and picking up new assignments. All of the enumerators were from the area. I spoke with them and they all told me that they were enjoying the work and that for the most part respondents were cooperative.

The enumerator I was to observe arrived at 11:45. She picked up her assignment and we drove approximately 10 miles to the assigned AA. The block we began with was one of the geographically easier blocks in the AA. We canvassed the block and began mapspotting. She mentioned that there had been some confusion about the order of canvassing, mapspotting, listing, and interviewing. She was told to mapspot a housing unit (HU) then do the address listing and interview the residents unit by unit. This was a change from how she had been doing it. She had been mapspotting all the HUs in the block, and then listing the address and performing the interview.

The block had a total of 11 structures and 12 HUs. Interviews were obtained at only three of the HUs. The first was a short form interview. The respondent was polite and cooperative, answering all of the enumerator's questions. When asked to provide proxy information for her neighbor who was not home, the respondent hesitated and said that if they were not home or did not want to cooperate she would not give out any information.

The second HU turned out to be a complicated interview. This interview was a short form. When the enumerator asked the young woman who answered how many people lived at the address, the woman thought and replied by saying "13 all together". The enumerator asked if they all lived in the HU. The respondent said that her family lived there, people lived in the apartment next door, and four people would be living in an apartment being built in between. As the enumerator began interviewing she tried to ascertain how many units were contained in the structure and where the people actually lived. The enumerator conducted the short form interview and included the three people in the woman's family and then knocked on the next door. This interview was to be a long form interview. The young woman who answered was polite and although she initially tried to reschedule the interview, she said she would take the time to do the interview then. During the course of the interview it became clear that the four people that would be moving into the apartment under construction actually resided next door. The enumerator did a thorough job of asking all the long form questions. There were six people at the HU and the enumerator retrieved a continuation form for the sixth person.

After the interview, which took about an hour and a half, we went back next door. The enumerator explained that after talking to her neighbor, it appeared as though the four people yet to be included would be living in her HU on April 1. The enumerator added these four people to the short form that had been used earlier for that HU. All together we spent approximately two hours at this address.

4. Conclusion

Everyone I met was extremely polite and willing to cooperate with the census. The enumerators seemed diligent and dedicated to doing the best job possible. All took their duties seriously. I was particularly impressed with the effort that the enumerator I observed made to correctly enumerate the respondents in the multi-unit structure. The enumerator did not use the flash cards, and did not make it entirely clear to the respondents that they could choose all races that they felt applied to them.

I was asked numerous questions regarding the purpose of the long form questionnaire. The LCOM pointed out that since Vermont had a high long form sampling rate for it's L/E areas, people there seemed to be even more sensitive to the publicity surrounding the long form.

The crew leader told me that he was not impressed with his training. He stated that it seemed like his trainer was unfamiliar with census activities and was just reading straight from the manual.

cc: Census 2000 Procedures and Operations Memorandum Series Distribution List
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